

ST. SOPHIA IN THE FOURTEENTH
AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES:
THE RUSSIAN TRAVELERS
ON THE RELICS

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This paper is substantially the same as that read at the Symposium on "Current Work in Medieval and Byzantine Studies," held at Dumbarton Oaks in May 1972, in which I summarized in part the results of my research on Russian travelers' descriptions of Constantinople.

JUSTINIAN'S church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople has attracted the attention of writers and scholars almost from the moment of its foundation. Through the centuries, much interest has been focused not only on the magnificent structure itself, but also on the interior decoration and arrangement of the church.¹ A significant aspect of this, which has been for the most part ignored, is the placement of holy relics within the shrine. Surprisingly, our knowledge of the sacred relics preserved in the greatest church building of Eastern Christendom comes almost exclusively from descriptions of the church by foreign visitors. The tales of the Russian travelers hold a central place among such accounts.² Byzantine sources are unusually taciturn about the relics housed in St. Sophia, probably because the constant availability of these objects of devotion to inhabitants of the Byzantine capital rendered them commonplace and consequently little worthy of mention. To Russian travelers, whose Christianity postdates the apostolic age by a good eight hundred years, the relics of Constantinople were incredible marvels. Western travelers, of course, treat the relics of St. Sophia and the other churches of the Byzantine capital with an equal sense of wonderment; unfortunately their reports are often so garbled as to be unintelligible. By the late Middle Ages Christians in the West and their eastern brethren had gone their separate ways. Westerners had developed a set of religious traditions in large part their own, and thus they stand uncomprehending before Eastern Christian relics, which take their meaning almost completely within the Byzantine tradition.³ As Orthodox Christians and followers of the Byzantine ritual tradition, Russian visitors, on the other hand, had absorbed their Christian folklore from the translated books of the Greeks. They had learned the lives

¹ The extent of the published work on the church of St. Sophia in Istanbul testifies to the importance of this building. The basic monographic works, and those most often used in the present paper, are: R. L. Van Nice, *St. Sophia in Istanbul: An Architectural Survey* (Washington, D. C., 1966-), on the architecture and archaeology; E. M. Antoniadès, "Ἐκφράσις τῆς Ἀγίας Σοφίας," 3 vols. (Athens, 1907-9), and W. R. Lethaby and H. Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building* (London, 1894), on the building and its arrangement and decorations; C. A. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 8 (Washington, D. C., 1962), on the figurative mosaics. Two recent books which treat the building as a whole and include excellent photographs are: H. Kähler, *Die Hagia Sophia*, with a chapter by C. Mango (Berlin, 1967; English translation, London, 1967), and H. Jantzen, *Die Hagia Sophia des Kaisers Justinian in Konstantinopel* (Cologne, 1967). A detailed annotated bibliography on the church can be found in *Dumbarton Oaks Bibliographies based on Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, Ser. I, *Literature on Byzantine Art 1892-1967*, ed. J. S. Allen, Pt. I (London, 1973), 260-68.

² Antoniadès ("Ἐκφράσις") and R. Janin (*La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*. Pt. 1: *Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat œcuménique*. Tome III: *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. [Paris, 1969], 455-70 and *passim*) particularly attempt to integrate information from the descriptions by foreign travelers into their studies on St. Sophia.

³ This by no means suggests that western descriptions of the churches of Constantinople are without value, but rather that these sources must be used cautiously. Several western accounts of the shrines of Constantinople, as a matter of fact, are extremely useful, particularly when used in conjunction with the memoirs of the Russian travelers. See, for instance, the works of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Bertrand de la Broquière, and Pero Tafur, as well as the twelfth-century Latin "Anonymus Banduri."

of the saints revered in the Byzantine world within their own hagiographic tradition; they had listened to the stories of the miracles effected by the holy icons in the liturgical hymns chanted in their own parish churches. In short, they came to St. Sophia not to see once more what they knew well, as was apparently the case with the Constantinopolitans, nor to listen in naive wonder to previously unheard tales of God's beneficence to the Eastern Church. The Russians came to Constantinople to see those marks of God's activity on earth about which they had heard since childhood. Thus, they were capable of understanding what they saw, and for this reason they serve as excellent sources.

The value of the list of relics from the year 1200 preserved by the Russian pilgrim Anthony of Novgorod has long been recognized. Its special virtue, of course, is not only its length and detail, but also the fact that it records relics preserved in the Byzantine capital on the eve of the city's fall to the knights of the Fourth Crusade and the subsequent looting. The fact that Anthony's description of the holy relics in Constantinople closely coincides with the lists of sacred booty shipped West during the period of the Latin Empire of Constantinople testifies to the accuracy of the Russian source.⁴ There is no single Russian description to equal that of Anthony of Novgorod in the period after the restoration of Byzantine power in Constantinople. The historian must instead turn to five separate Old-Russian descriptions of the city dating from the rather restricted time span between 1349 and 1423, namely the "Journey of Stephen of Novgorod," the "Journey of Ignatius of Smolensk," the so-called "Anonymous Russian Description of Constantinople," the "Journey of Alexander the Clerk," and the "Journey of the Monk Zosima."⁵ By collating

⁴ Cf. P. de Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, 3 vols. (Geneva, 1877–1904). The importance of Anthony's testimony on the religious treasures of the Byzantine capital is reflected in its publication history and, indeed, in the large number of preserved manuscripts of this work. See M.-J. Rouët de Journel, "A propos du *Voyage d'Antoine de Novgorod*," *Revue des Etudes Slaves*, 34 (1957), 112–18. The text of the "Pilgrim Book of Anthony, Archbishop of Novgorod," cited in the present study, is *Kniga palomnik . . . Antonija, Arhiepiskopa novgorodskogo*, ed. H. M. Loparev, *Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik*, 51 (St. Petersburg, 1899), hereafter cited as Anthony.

⁵ These five texts are not unknown to western scholarship on the Byzantine capital. They are, however, most often used in the French translation of Mme B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, I, 1, Publications de la Société de l'Orient Latin (Geneva, 1889), hereafter cited as Khitrowo. This translation, which might have served some purpose in its day, is now recognized to be inadequate, inaccurate, and often misleading. Considerably more reliable are the diplomatic editions of these Old-Russian travel tales, and it is these printed editions which will be cited hereafter, with the appropriate Khitrowo reference added only when it agrees with the Old-Russian text. I am currently preparing a new edition of the Russian travel descriptions of Constantinople, with extensive commentaries.

The text of the description of Constantinople by Stephen of Novgorod, who visited that city during Holy Week in April 1349, is published as "Hoženie Stefana novgorodca," ed. M. N. Speranskij, *Iz starinnoj novgorodskoj literatury XIV veka* (Leningrad, 1934), 50–82, hereafter cited as Stephen. On the date of Stephen's visit, see I. Ševčenko, "Notes on Stephen, the Novgorodian Pilgrim to Constantinople in the XIV Century," *Südostforschungen*, 12 (1953), 165–69. The narrative of Ignatius of Smolensk, which is an account of the author's sojourn in the Byzantine capital between 28 June 1389 and 11 February 1392, is available as *Hoždenie Ignatija Smolnjanina*, ed. S. V. Arsen'ev, *Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik*, 12 (St. Petersburg, 1887), hereafter cited as Ignatius; a conflated (although incomplete) version of the Ignatian text is included in several later Russian chronicles, and is published on the basis of the sixteenth-century Nikon Chronicle in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, 11 (St. Petersburg, 1897), 95–104, hereafter cited as Chronicle Ignatius. The anonymous Russian description of Constantinople has been published as "Opisanie Konstantinopolja načala XIV veka,"

the information provided by these five apparently independent texts, however, it is possible to obtain not only a useful list of the relics preserved in the church of St. Sophia in this period, but also a good idea of how and where in the church these relics were displayed. The present study will consider only those objects of interest reported by more than one source, although occasionally relics mentioned in but one source will be used to determine the location of those mentioned more often.

THE SOUTHWEST ENTRANCE

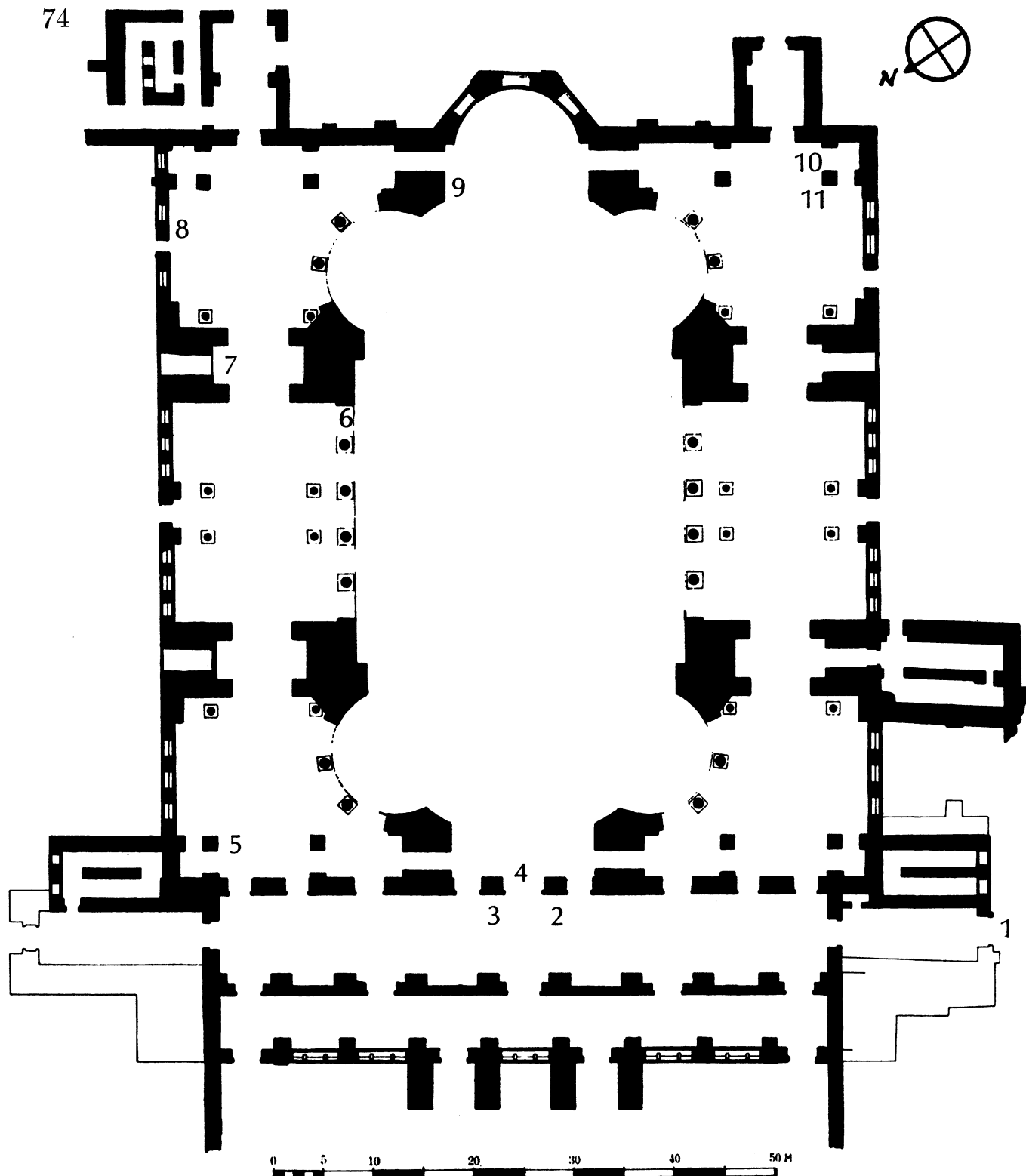
With the exception of Alexander the Clerk, who apparently visited the church on an important holiday, when the great west doors of the exonarthex were opened to accommodate the crowds expected at St. Sophia,⁶ the late Russian visitors seem to have entered the Great Church as one does today, through the southwest vestibule.⁷ It is generally assumed that a narthex (πρόναος) dedicated to the Archangel Michael stood at the southwest entrance to the church, and indeed the testimony of the anonymous Russian pilgrim would confirm this general location, for he notes the narthex of St. Michael as he enters the church from the southwest, and before he mentions the "entrance to the Patriarchal Palace on the right."⁸ The entrance to the

ed. Speranskij, *Iz starinnoj*, 127–37, hereafter cited as Russian Anonymus, which in reality dates from between late 1389 and early 1391. On this dating, see C. Mango, "The Date of the Anonymous Russian Description of Constantinople," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 45 (1952), 380–85. A later reworking of this text into a very artificial dialogue form (L. N. Majkov, *Beseda o svjatynjah i drugih dostopamjatnostjah Caregrada*, Sbornik otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti, 51, no. 4 [St. Petersburg, 1890]; Materialy i izsledovanija po starinnoj russkoj literature, I, hereafter cited as Russian Anonymus Dialogue), occasionally preserves material missing or misunderstood in the older text. The brief description of Constantinople by Alexander the Clerk is published with the Fourth Novgorod Chronicle under the year 1395, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, 4 (St. Petersburg, 1848), 357–58, hereafter cited as Alexander. This text should be dated by internal evidence to the years 1391–97. The description of the monk Deacon Zosima has been published as *Hoženie inoka Zosimy*, ed. H. M. Loparev, *Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik*, 24 (St. Petersburg, 1889), hereafter cited as Zosima. This work is best dated by internal evidence to the years 1421–23.

⁶ Alexander, 357 = Khitrowo, 161.

⁷ Most specific about his mode of entrance is the Russian Anonymus, who says that one enters the narthex (*přitvor*) of St. Sophia by the south door (p. 128); later he adds that when one enters this church he passes a fountain "on his right" (p. 130); the "fountain" must be the still preserved octagon-in-square baptistery at the west end of the south side of the church (on which, see F. Dirimtekin, "Ayasofya Baptisteri," with English translation, *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 12/2 [1963/1965], 54–87), for he describes the great fountain in the atrium (the other known fountain on the grounds of St. Sophia) in another place (Russian Anonymus, 131–32). Stephen of Novgorod's route from the Justinian column in the Augusteon to St. Sophia would lead quite naturally to the southwest entrance (Stephen, 51 = Khitrowo, 116. On the relation of the Augusteon to St. Sophia, see C. A. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, with an Appendix by E. Mamboury, *Arkæologisk-kunsthistoriske Meddelelser*, 4/4 [Copenhagen, 1959], 23, fig. 1 and *passim*). The testimony of the other late Russian travelers as to how they entered the church is only indirect. The large-scale replacement of the paving flags around the south door of the inner narthex (see Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 9) would indicate the kind of heavy traffic the chief means of ingress into the church must have attracted, and would thus serve to confirm the information in the Russian sources.

⁸ Russian Anonymus, 128–29. He next mentions the central west doors of the nave which he says are to the right, making it clear that he is going north through the inner narthex from the southwest vestibule. The Russian source's use of the word *přitvor* for the shrine of St. Michael suggests that "narthex" rather than "chapel" would be the proper translation of πρόναος in this case. On *přitvor* = narthex, see Mango, *The Brazen House*, 67 note 179.



LOCATION OF RELICS AND IMAGES IN ST. SOPHIA

1. Probable Location of the Narthex of the Archangel Michael. 2. Image of the Virgin Which spoke to St. Mary of Egypt. 3. Image of the "Confessor Savior." 4. Image of the Chalke Savior over the Imperial Doors. 5. Column of St. Gregory the Wonderworker. 6. Table of the Passion Relics. 7. Probable Location of an Image of the Savior. 8. Probable Location of the Pastoral Staff of St. John Chrysostom. 9. Suggested Location of the Body of St. Arsenius. 10. Table of Abraham. 11. "Iron Bed" of the Martyrs.

patriarchal palace in this case would be the entrance, now blocked, to the southwest ramp leading to the southwest part of the galleries. These were considered adjuncts to the neighboring buildings of the Patriarchate.⁹ Considerable controversy exists about whether the pronaos of St. Michael was the southwest vestibule as preserved today, or an adjunct to it, now destroyed (text fig., 1). As is true with the Byzantine sources, the anonymous Russian description would allow for either interpretation.¹⁰

Although the Russian source adds nothing to our previous knowledge of the location of this shrine of St. Michael, it does considerably expand knowledge of the tradition connected with it. The Russian Anonymus relates the existence and even the location of the shrine to the story of the Archangel Michael's appearance to a boy who was guarding tools during the construction of the church of St. Sophia.¹¹ Another Russian traveler, Ignatius of Smolensk, also mentions venerating "the image of the great Archangel Michael, who appeared to the child who was guarding the tools for building the church."¹² Although the Ignatius text does not specify that this image was in the pronaos of St. Michael, the fact that a noteworthy feature of this pronaos was a mosaic image of St. Michael the Archangel,¹³ and that the Russian Anonymus connects the same story with the pronaos, would tend to confirm this identification. The story itself, which is summarized in the Russian Anonymus text, is a rather pleasant piece of well-known Constantinople folklore. During the building of St. Sophia a boy was set to guard the tools while the architects dined with the Emperor. As the boy was watching over the tools, the Archangel Michael appeared to him in the guise of a radiant eunuch and offered to stand guard over the church until the boy returned from delivering the eunuch's message to the Emperor concerning the name of the church and the importance of completing it quickly. Divining the identity of the eunuch, the Emperor cleverly sent the boy abroad, so that he would never return to the church of St. Sophia and the Archangel Michael would be forced to remain as its guardian.¹⁴ The story retold in the Russian Anonymus and alluded to by

⁹ I here accept Mango's very reasonable interpretation of these rooms and of the sense of the Russian Anonymus' "entrance to the Patriarchal Palace" (*The Brazen House*, 52-54). For a description of these rooms at the southwest corner of the gallery, see Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics*, 44-46 and 94.

¹⁰ The Russian anonymous text is the only later Russian pilgrim tale which gives any topographical information on the narthex of St. Michael. On the controversy over the identification of the *pronaos* as the present southwest vestibule or a now destroyed building at the southwest door of the church, see E. H. Swift, *Hagia Sophia* (New York, 1940), 94-96. I am inclined to agree with the conclusions of Antoniadēs ("Ἐκφράσις, I, 145-46) that the narthex of St. Michael was a separate building at the southwest entrance of St. Sophia.

¹¹ Russian Anonymus, *loc. cit.*

¹² Ignatius, 8 = Khitrowo, 137.

¹³ Nicetas Choniates, Bonn. ed., 309.

¹⁴ Russian Anonymus, *loc. cit.* A basic version of this story, probably dating from the ninth century, is contained in the collection of Christian folklore from Constantinople, the *Διήγησις*, 10 (*Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, ed. Th. Preger, I [Leipzig, 1901], 85-88). The story is repeated by Pseudo-Codinus, Bonn. ed., II, 137-38, and was also known in Russia, in Slavic translation, certainly by the fifteenth century (cf. *Vizantijsko-slavjanskija skazanija o sozdanii hrama Sv. Sofii Caregradskoj*, ed. S. G. Vilinskij [Odessa, 1900], 84-85; *Skazanie o Sv. Sofii Caregradskoj*, ed. Arhim. Leonid, Pamjatniki drevnej pis'mennosti, 78 [St. Petersburg, 1889], 11-13). The story was told to the Russian

Ignatius of Smolensk is clearly the same as that recorded in the Byzantine sources, except that the Byzantine version is very definite about the place where the Archangel appeared: it was to the right of a pier of an upper arch, on the level of the newly laid floor of the gallery.¹⁵ Since Byzantine texts normally assume one is facing the altar at the east end of the church, this statement would seem to mean that the apparition took place in the south gallery, for there is no floor to the right of the north piers in the galleries. Moreover, Pseudo-Codinus adds that this spot was *πλησίον τοῦ συλλαγόνου* or *συλλογιαίου*—apparently the place where the councils met, which was in the south gallery of the church, between the piers.¹⁶ Clearly, the apparition of St. Michael could not have taken place in the south gallery of the church and at its southwest vestibule, the location of the *pronaos* of St. Michael. As far as can be determined, Byzantine sources do not specifically connect the tale of the Archangel and the boy with the *pronaos* of St. Michael and its image of the Saint. One may draw equally well one of two conclusions from the later Russian travelers about the *pronaos* of St. Michael. Either, even though St. Michael appeared to the boy in the gallery of the church, the event was commemorated by a narthex of St. Michael at the southwest corner of the church, the normal entrance to the building; or tradition gradually came to connect a shrine of St. Michael the Archangel located at the ordinary entrance to the church with the apparition which happened elsewhere.¹⁷

THE NARTHEX

The information preserved in the texts of the Russian travelers is considerably easier to analyze when it deals with the inner narthex of St. Sophia;

pilgrim Anthony of Novgorod in the year 1200 (Anthony, 8–9), and later to the Spanish traveler Pero Tafur (Pero Tafur, *Andanças é viajes* [Madrid, 1874], 179–80 = *The Travels and Adventures of Pero Tafur, 1435–1439*, trans. M. Letts [London, 1926], 144–45). It must not have been very widely known in Russia, however, for the compiler of the Nikon Chronicle (or its prototype) misunderstood Ignatius of Smolensk's reference to it and retold, instead, the story of a boy guarding cattle for a monastery, who found gold (Chronicle Ignatius, 100. What appears to be the same story about a boy finding gold was told on Mount Athos about the Docheiariou Monastery in 1931! See R. M. Dawkins, *The Monks of Athos* [London, 1936], 338–41 and *passim*). Similarly, the editor of the dialogue based on the Russian anonymous text feels free to change some elements in the story and connect the apparition of the Archangel with the "completion" of St. Sophia by the Emperor Romanus (III?; ruled 1028–34) and to make the recipient of the visitation the pious bishop of the dialogue himself (Russian Anonymus Dialogue, 12–13).

¹⁵ *Διήγησις*, 10, ed. Preger, 88; the Slavic versions say simply that the apparition took place in the gallery on the right (*Vizantijsko-slavjanskij skazanija*, 85; *Skazanie o Sv. Sofii*, 11).

¹⁶ Pseudo-Codinus, II, 138. On the area where the councils met in St. Sophia, see Antoniades, *Ἐκφρασις*, II, 322–23. According to Anthony of Novgorod, the apparition took place on the ground level of the building and at the "left of the great altar" (on the south side of the church [?]), and was commemorated by an image of three angels or, in some manuscripts, three images of angels, displayed there (Anthony, 8–9 and apparatus). Interestingly, Slavic versions of the *Διήγησις* also say that the place of the apparition in the south gallery was marked by an icon, but of Christ (*Vizantijsko-slavjanskij skazanija*, 85; *Skazanie o Sv. Sofii*, 13).

¹⁷ Professor Ernst Kitzinger has made the interesting suggestion that there might be a tradition of Michael shrines at the entrances of important churches. Given the example of the "Torhalle" of the monastery at Lorsch (cf. F. Behn, *Die Karolingische Klosterkirche von Lorsch an der Bergstraße* [Berlin, 1934], 83ff.), this idea bears further study.

and it is from these Russian sources that we know about at least two icons which were displayed there. Deacon Zosima, for instance, mentions kissing the image of the Virgin which forbade St. Mary of Egypt to enter the church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁸ Although Zosima does not say where in St. Sophia this image was located, other Russian travelers, our only sources for the presence of this icon in St. Sophia, do. Ignatius of Smolensk places it at the "great doors," that is, at the central "imperial doors" leading from the narthex to the nave of the church.¹⁹ Alexander the Clerk adds that the image was on his right as he looked toward the sanctuary from the narthex.²⁰

To the left of the imperial doors, again according to Alexander, balancing, as it were, the icon of the Mother of God on the right, "the Savior was portrayed in marble" (*preobrazilsja Spas na mramorě*).²¹ While this image might literally have been a marble bas-relief depiction of the Savior, as the text suggests, this point should not be pressed. The image in question might have been, for instance, in mosaic inlay or, indeed, in encaustic on marble; the Russian travelers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are somewhat at a loss for precise vocabulary to deal with media little known in contemporary Russia. It would seem that this image, too, had a tradition behind it. Deacon Zosima records kissing an image of the Savior just after he tells of coming to the church of St. Sophia, and immediately before venerating the icon of the Virgin which addressed St. Mary of Egypt.²² The latter icon was, as mentioned above, in the narthex to the right (i.e., south) of the imperial doors. Zosima's recorded order of viewing objects of interest, then, would suggest that the icon of the Savior in question was also in the narthex. The story which Zosima attaches to this image seems to indicate a liturgical reason for its presence in the narthex. According to him, this image was called the "Confessor Savior" because people confessed to it those sins which they were ashamed to confess before a priest.²³ By tradition at least, unshriven sinners were relegated to the

¹⁸ Zosima, 3 = Khitrowo, 201. St. Mary of Egypt was a fifth-century Alexandrian courtesan who turned to righteousness and asceticism after having been restrained from worshipping at the Holy Sepulchre by an unseen force, and instructed by an image of the Mother of God at the doors of the same shrine to do penance in the desert. This story is summarized in the chronicle version of Ignatius' description of Constantinople (Chronicle Ignatius, 99). On the literary tradition of the *Vitae* of St. Mary of Egypt, see *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, ed. F. Halkin, 3 vols., Subsidia Hagiographica, 8a (Brussels, 1957), II, 80–82.

Interestingly enough, given the lack of Byzantine sources on this icon's presence in Constantinople, the early-twelfth-century Russian pilgrim to the Holy Land, Prior Daniel, tells of seeing the place where the icon of the Mother of God spoke to St. Mary of Egypt, but does not mention the presence there of the icon itself (*Žit'e i hoženi'e Danila rus'skyja zemli igumena*, ed. M. A. Venevitinov, Pravoslavnyj Palestinskij Sbornik, 3/3 = 9 [St. Petersburg, 1885], 27 = Khitrowo, 18 = *The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land: 1106–1107 A. D.*, trans. C. W. Wilson, Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 4/3 [London, 1895], 18). Possibly the icon had already been removed to Constantinople.

¹⁹ Ignatius, 6–7 = Khitrowo, 135. On the imperial doors of St. Sophia, see Antoniadēs, "Ἐκφρασις," I, 174–78.

²⁰ Alexander, 357 = Khitrowo, 161.

²¹ *Ibid.* It is interesting to note that the placement of these two images of Christ and of the Virgin is the opposite of what one would expect. In Orthodox churches today the icon of Christ is normally to the right (south) of the central door into the nave, and that of the Virgin to the left (north), in imitation of the arrangement on the iconostasis.

²² Zosima, 3 = Khitrowo, 201.

²³ *Ibid.* I have found no record of a "Confessor Savior" image in Byzantine sources.

nartheces of churches,²⁴ so the narthex would seem a particularly appropriate place to display this image, as well as the image which forbade the sinful Mary of Egypt to penetrate the nave of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. On the basis of coincidence of location and subject, Zosima's image of the "Confessor Savior" and the image of the Savior placed by Alexander to the left of the imperial doors should probably be identified as the same icon.

Archaeological evidence supports the testimony of the Russian travelers concerning the icons in the inner narthex. An investigation of the physical condition of the area to the north and south of the imperial doors in the narthex reveals marks of serious wear (north) and even replacement (south), such as one might expect where popular icons were displayed.²⁵ The east wall of the narthex, moreover, betrays the presence of rectangular dowel holes centered below each of the decorative bas-relief marble panels on either side of the imperial doors. These dowel holes are in the bottom rank of the upper revetment system about 2.2 meters above the pavement, that is, at approximately the height one would hang a large icon which could be kissed by the faithful. On the basis of the evidence provided by the descriptions of the Russian travelers, I would identify the two icons described above as the objects which hung from dowels in these holes in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries²⁶ (text fig., 2 and 3).

THE WEST END OF THE NAVE

Inside the nave of the church the descriptions of Stephen of Novgorod and of the Russian Anonymus attest to an icon of the Savior above the imperial doors.²⁷ Stephen connects it with the martyrdom of St. Theodosia,²⁸ and thereby suggests the iconography of the image to be that of the "Chalke Savior," that is, a copy of the icon of the Savior which was displayed at the Chalke or Bronze Gate of the Imperial Palace. St. Theodosia's attempt to prevent the removal of this icon of the Savior from the palace gate at the

²⁴ See Leo Allatios, *The Newer Temples of the Greeks*, trans. A. Cutler (University Park, Penna., 1969), 7-8, and H. Leclercq, "Narthex," *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, XII/1, col. 889.

²⁵ See Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 9. I would here like to express my gratitude to Mr. Robert L. Van Nice of Dumbarton Oaks. Much of my information on the physical characteristics of St. Sophia originally came from conversations with him.

²⁶ While it would be possible to construe the Russian sources as meaning that these two images hung to the right and left of the central group of three doors from the narthex into the nave, which included the imperial doors as its central component, rather than to the right and left of the central portal, this interpretation should be rejected. Even though there seem to be pairs of plugged dowel holes in the revetment sheets to the north and south of the central set of doors at a height of about 2.2 meters, and the paving panels in front of these areas show wear similar to that found on either side of the central portal (cf. Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 9), it is only the valves of the central doorway that were reputed to be made of the wood of Noah's ark, and the imperial doors made of this holy relic are the chief point of reference for locating the icons in the text of Alexander, the pivotal source on this question. Cf. Alexander, 357. On the tradition that the imperial doors of St. Sophia were made of the wood of Noah's ark, see Antoniadēs, *Ἑκφρασις*, I, 178.

²⁷ Stephen, 51; Russian Anonymus, 129 = Khitrowo, 116; 225-26.

²⁸ Stephen, *loc. cit.*

beginning of the iconoclast period resulted in her martyrdom.²⁹ A copy of this famous icon seems to have been installed above the imperial doors of St. Sophia after the restoration of icons, for it is mentioned in three of the Russian descriptions of the church³⁰ (text fig., 4).

THE NORTH AISLE

According to the Russian Anonymus a number of relics were displayed in the north aisle of St. Sophia; unfortunately, several of the objects he notes are mentioned in no other source. Proceeding left from the imperial doors one passes a ciborium or baldachin (*beseda*) "renowned among Christians in that healing comes from it." Thereupon one comes to "stone columns from Jerusalem" and then to a column which is "on the left, near the wall," in which is enshrined the body of St. Gregory the Theologian.³¹ The column of St. Gregory is readily identifiable, although the column which the source so carefully locates was sacred not to the memory of St. Gregory the Theologian (i.e., Gregory Nazianzus, patriarch of Constantinople), but to St. Gregory the Wonderworker (Gregory the Thaumaturge of Neo-Caesarea).³² Anthony of Novgorod notes that the column of St. Gregory the Wonderworker is near the west doors and "covered with brass plates." "People," he continues, "kiss it and rub their chests and shoulders against the column to cure sickness."³³ The column of St. Gregory, then, may be identified as the northwest column, nearest the wall, in the north aisle, as the Russian Anonymus notes, which today is still covered with brass plates to a height of almost two meters (text fig., 5). Among the Turks, even in recent times, the column was reputed to "weep," and the moisture thus secreted was used by the pious to cure various illnesses.³⁴ The repairs to the flooring visible around it were probably necessitated by the wear of the feet of the faithful approaching it.³⁵ This column might well have housed relics of St. Gregory the Wonderworker, since traditionally the major columns of the edifice were thought to contain relics,³⁶ but no source other than the Russian Anonymus makes the claim that the Saint's body was entombed in the column dedicated to him.³⁷

²⁹ On this incident, see Mango, *The Brazen House*, 108–35. The iconography of the Chalke-type image of the Savior is discussed *ibid.*, 135–42, and in P. Underwood, "The Deisis Mosaic in the Kahrie Cami at Istanbul," *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of A. M. Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), 254–60. On the life of St. Theodosia (sometime Mary the Patrician), see BHG, II, 95 and 286–87.

³⁰ Anthony, 7; Stephen, *loc. cit.*; Russian Anonymus, *loc. cit.* On this icon of Christ, see G. Majeska, "The Image of the Chalke Savior in St. Sophia," *Byzantinoslavica*, 32 (1971), 284–95.

³¹ Russian Anonymus, 130.

³² Διήγησις, 5, ed. Preger, 80.

³³ Anthony, 6–7.

³⁴ On this column, see Antoniadis, "Ἐκφρασις, II, 226–27 and pl. 62.

³⁵ Cf. Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 9.

³⁶ Διήγησις, 22, ed. Preger, 99. Stephen of Novgorod, for instance, notes that relics were preserved in the great porphyry columns of the northeast exedra (Stephen, 51 = Khitrowo, 116). Like Anthony before him, Stephen also notes that people "touch what ails them" against the columns containing relics and are thereby healed.

³⁷ In any event, the body would not be complete, for an Armenian visitor to Constantinople at about this time claims to have seen the whole right hand of this Saint at the Peribleptos Monastery

From the Gregory column in the west bay of the north aisle the Russian Anonymus proceeds toward the apse of the church, that is to say, east, and in passing points out an icon of the Virgin in a ciborium (*teremec*) "on the left," or possibly in the same left (i.e., north) aisle. This icon, we are told, despatched architects to the Kiev Caves Monastery to build its chief church.³⁸ According to most Russian traditions, however, it was the icon of the Virgin at Blachernae which despatched the architects to Kiev.³⁹ The Russian Anonymus suggests that this icon of the Mother of God at St. Sophia was also important for another reason; it wept during the Latin occupation of Constantinople, and the tears formed pearls.⁴⁰ It would be very difficult to locate the shrine which housed this icon on the basis of the minimal information furnished by the text. It is clear, however, that the image was displayed in a ciborium on one's left as one walked toward the apse, or possibly in the left (north) aisle. Most tentatively, one might see evidence for the location of the shrine of this icon in the deep cut in the pavement between the northwest pier and the eastern porphyry column of the northwest exedra. This mark suggests the emplacement of a heavy piece of ceremonial furniture such as a ciborium in a place which the testimony of the text would allow.⁴¹ While there is obvious difficulty in determining the exact location of this icon, the information concerning it provided by the Russian Anonymus' text might prove valuable in another way. In the year 1200 Anthony of Novgorod saw a weeping icon of the Virgin near the entrance to the chapel of St. Peter situated behind the apse of St. Sophia.⁴² We hear little about this chapel in the Palaeologan period, and should assume that it fell into disuse.⁴³ If so, possibly the icon of the weeping Virgin was then moved into the main body of the church, and the legend of its weeping updated to reflect the unhappy period of Latin rule in Constantinople.

Continuing farther on "toward the apse," the Russian Anonymus comes to the table used to display the relics of Christ's Passion.⁴⁴ The writer claims that this table was made of wood from Noah's ark, but his statement does not

("A Medieval Armenian Pilgrim's Description of Constantinople," ed. and trans. S. Brock, *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes*, N. S., 4 [1967], 88. On the Peribleptos Monastery, see Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*², 218–22); another relic of St. Gregory the Thaumaturge appears in an inventory of the treasury of St. Sophia in 1396 (*Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani*, 2, *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, eds. Fr. Miklosich and I. Müller, II [Vienna, 1862], 569).

³⁸ Russian Anonymus, 130 = Khitrowo, 226–27.

³⁹ Cf. *Kyjevo-Pečerskyj Pateryk*, ed. D. Abramovyč. Pam'jatky movy ta pys'menstva dav'noji Ukrajin, 4 (Kiev, 1930; reprinted as *Das Paterikon des Kiever Höhenklosters* [Munich, 1964]), 5–8.

⁴⁰ Russian Anonymus, *loc. cit.*

⁴¹ See Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 9.

⁴² Anthony, 4–5 = Khitrowo, 89. On the chapel of St. Peter at St. Sophia, see Antoniadēs, "Ἐκφρασις, II, 161–63, and Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*², 398–99.

⁴³ The chief relic of this chapel, St. Peter's chains, was viewed at an unidentified monastery by an early-fifteenth-century pilgrim ("A Medieval Armenian Pilgrim's Description," 87), which would indicate that the chapel where it had been kept previously was no longer in use (although the editor of the Armenian text would see in the unnamed *monastery* the *chapel* of St. Peter [*ibid.*, 95]). On the other hand, the annual commemoration of St. Peter's chains was still celebrated at the chapel in late Byzantine times, at least in theory (cf. M. Gedeon, *Βυζαντινὸν ἱεροπολόγιον* [Constantinople, 1899], 59–60).

⁴⁴ Russian Anonymus, 130 = Khitrowo, 227.

demand credence; no other source confirms it, and the anonymous text as it has come down to us has far too many objects in St. Sophia made of this hallowed wood.⁴⁵ We can assume that the Anonymus is still in the north aisle for, after discussing the table used to display the Passion relics, he mentions an image of the Savior nearby on his left, and the pastoral staff of St. Chrysostom, also on his left and "fastened to the wall."⁴⁶ If he is near a wall, the visitor must be in an aisle; for it to be on his left as he walks east, he must be in the north aisle. Stephen of Novgorod approached the revered table of the Passion relics directly from the doors at the west end of the church, and immediately afterwards noted a mosaic image depicting Christ "on the wall of that side [of the church]."⁴⁷ This image should be identified with the Savior image, which the Russian Anonymus likewise places east of the Passion relics (see *infra*). Collating this piece of information with the testimony of the Russian Anonymus it seems clear that the table for the Passion relics was in the north aisle. Yet, Stephen of Novgorod noticed the crowd around the Passion relics as he began to walk east from the imperial doors, that is, from the west end of the nave.⁴⁸ Similarly, Ignatius of Smolensk observed this table while going from the imperial doors in the west to the sanctuary, again, from the central nave.⁴⁹ The testimony of Stephen and Ignatius, then, would seem to suggest that the Passion relics table was at least visible from the nave; the Russian Anonymus, on the other hand, locates this piece of furniture in the north aisle. Quite likely, all the sources are correct, for the flooring immediately west of the northeast pier of the church shows cuttings, such as the placement of heavy ceremonial furniture would entail, and also a number of replacement flags, indicating that the floor had received considerable wear in this area. Since both of these pieces of archaeological evidence extend beyond the confines of the north aisle into the nave,⁵⁰ one may conclude that the furniture placed there would have been visible from the nave as well as from the aisle. It is quite likely that it was here, in the bay of the central portion of the north aisle closest to the northeast exedra (and thus to the "stone columns of beautiful marble" which Stephen notes shortly thereafter; see *infra*, p. 83) that the later Russian pilgrims Stephen, Ignatius, and the Russian Anonymus, visited the table used to display the Passion relics (text fig., 6).

"Going on a bit" from the table of the relics, Stephen of Novgorod notes, as I have mentioned, that "the Savior is depicted in mosaic on the wall of that side [of the church]"; he comments on the image just before he comes to col-

⁴⁵ According to this text, wood from Noah's ark was displayed in the narthex to the north of the imperial doors, and, in addition, was preserved "with a cup" standing on a column before the image of the Chalke Savior in the nave, to make a baldachin in the northwest exedra of the church, and, here, to form the table of the Passion relics (pp. 129, 130).

⁴⁶ Russian Anonymus, 130, and apparatus.

⁴⁷ Stephen, 51.

⁴⁸ It will be remembered that Stephen was in Constantinople during Holy Week (1349), when the Passion relics were exposed on this table for the veneration of the faithful (cf. Ševčenko, "Notes on Stephen," 165-68 and *passim*). The Russian Anonymus (*loc. cit.*) also mentions the crowds which came to revere these relics when they were displayed.

⁴⁹ Ignatius, 7 = Khitrowo, 135.

⁵⁰ See Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 10.

umns which seem to be those of the northeast exedra.⁵¹ As will be recalled, in proceeding "toward the apse" from the table of the Passion relics, the Russian Anonymus also notes that "on the left the Savior is carved in expensive marble stone."⁵² The fact that these two descriptions locate an image of the Savior in approximately the same spot strongly suggests that the references are to the same image. A question as to the nature of the medium still remains, however. Very likely the image was done in mosaic, as the text of Stephen notes. While it is not impossible that the image was a marble bas-relief, as the Russian anonymous text seems to suggest,⁵³ it should be noted that, in general, the information preserved by Stephen is more exact. Moreover, because of the rarity of mosaic images in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Russia, the technical word denoting this medium was not very common. One would not be surprised to find an author using an appropriate circumlocution such as "in expensive marble" to describe a mosaic. According to the Russian Anonymus this image of the Savior effected cures; Stephen of Novgorod here becomes more specific and indicates by what means the image healed the sick. Holy water flowed from the nail wounds in Christ's feet, and one was anointed with the holy water and with oil⁵⁴—presumably the oil from a lamp kept burning before the image. The presence of nail wounds in the feet narrows the range of iconographic types which the image could have taken—it would have been either a Crucifixion or post-Crucifixion scene. Unfortunately, the exact location of the image cannot be determined with any certainty. Since the Russian sources note that this Savior image is "on the wall of that side [of the church]" (Stephen), and "on the left," east of the table of the Passion relics (Russian Anonymus), it can rather safely be assigned a place on the north wall, east of the central colonnaded bay of the north aisle but west of the sanctuary area, which is specifically mentioned later. These facts would put the image either in the small chamber north of the northeast pier, or in the northeast exedra. Stephen clearly mentions kissing it;⁵⁵ the image must, therefore, have been placed rather low. The north wall of the chamber between the northeast pier and its respond is of plaster painted to resemble marble, whereas the north wall of the northeast exedra is revetted in apparently original sheets of marble. Since it remains unclear whether this image of the Savior was a mosaic executed directly on the wall, or a panel mosaic icon or bas-relief attached to the wall, no final conclusion can be reached. It is true that the plaster coat on the northeast pier respond would allow for repairs

⁵¹ Stephen, 51. These are the only large columns nearby. Stephen also remarks on the "very beautiful columns of purple stone" of the southeast exedra (p. 53).

⁵² Russian Anonymus, 130.

⁵³ "Vyrezan Spas v kameni v dorogom aspide." The most obvious reading of this text, that the image in question was three-dimensional, must be rejected out of hand. Religious statues had no ritual place in Byzantine churches, particularly after the iconoclastic period, and any statues which existed would have served only a decorative function. They certainly would not have performed miraculous cures as this image did (see *infra*). Moreover, Old Russian does have specific words to denote statues.

⁵⁴ Russian Anonymus, 130; Stephen, 51.

⁵⁵ Stephen, 51 = Khitrowo, 116.

after a mosaic image had been detached from the wall; but it is also true that the occasional pitting of the marble revetments of the north wall of the east bay of the north aisle recalls dowel holes, from which the image in question might have hung. The former explanation would seem to be the more plausible for several reasons: Stephen speaks of the "wonderfully decorated stone columns of beautiful marble" (presumably the porphyry columns of the northeast exedra) only after mentioning the image of Christ; moreover, the coat of plaster imitating marble strongly suggests that an attempt has been made to cover scars left by the removal of some object, which could easily have been a figurative mosaic, such as the one mentioned by Stephen; finally, from the expression "on the wall" one would expect a monumental depiction rather than a theoretically portative icon (text fig., 7).

Continuing toward the apse, and by now almost assuredly in the northeast exedra, the Russian Anonymus notes that the (patriarchal) staff of St. John Chrysostom is attached to the wall on his left (again, the north wall of the edifice).⁵⁶ Deacon Zosima's testimony not only confirms the presence of this relic in St. Sophia, but also, in conjunction with the information in the anonymous text, clarifies its exact location. The available manuscripts of Zosima's description preserve three different readings for the location of Chrysostom's crozier: "high up on the wall," "high up on a step," and "we went there by steps."⁵⁷ An interpretation combining the first and third of these variants would make considerable sense and, besides, is supported by the physical aspects of the northeast exedra, where the Russian Anonymus seems to locate this relic. In Byzantine times the clergy apparently used this exedra for preparing the eucharistic elements and liturgical appurtenances for processions, since it connected with the adjacent *skeuophylakion* or treasury-sacristy by a door in the north wall, with steps leading up to it.⁵⁸ An area of the church reserved for the clergy would be an appropriate place to display the staff of a sometime pastor of the church. If this hypothesis is accepted, the staff would have been displayed on the north wall of the northeast exedra, near the steps leading to the door (text fig., 8).

THE SANCTUARY

All five of the later Russian travelers to Constantinople mention viewing the relics of St. Arsenius (patriarch of Constantinople, 1235–1260; 1261–1265). The Russian Anonymus claims that these relics were preserved "in the left-

⁵⁶ *Supra*, note 46.

⁵⁷ Zosima, 3, and apparatus: "vverhu stoit v stepeni"; "vverhu stoit v steně"; "i hodi hom tu po stepenem." There is, however, no indication in this text of what specific part of the church is under discussion, although one of the texts says (ungrammatically, suggesting a scribal error) that one went to this image "from the great church door." The other manuscripts simply list the great door as next in a series of objects seen in the church.

⁵⁸ See Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 11; Antoniadēs, "Ἐκφράσεις, II, 146–53; F. Dirimtekin, "Le Skeuophylakion de Sainte-Sophie," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 19 (= *Mélanges Raymond Janin* [1961], 390–400 and pls., and especially 397).

hand side of the sanctuary,"⁵⁹ which would mean the northern part, given the regular meaning of "left" in this source. Stephen of Novgorod's testimony would seem to corroborate that of the anonymous description, for he revered the relics while on his way from the northeast exedra (where the image of Christ was displayed on the wall) to the passageway which circled around east of the apse and which he must have entered through the door in the east wall of the north aisle.⁶⁰ The other three Russian sources give no details as to the relics' location, although the order in the most complete of these catalogues, that of Ignatius, would at least suggest that the Saint's relics were at the east end of the church.⁶¹ It was at St. Sophia that the early fifteenth-century Castilian envoy Clavijo also was shown "a sacred relic, namely the body of a certain Patriarch that was most perfectly preserved, with the bones and flesh thereon."⁶² Since from the Spaniard's description this relic seems to have been placed at the east end of the church, it can be no other than that of Arsenius. Clavijo's words on the state of its preservation would suggest that the body was on display in a coffin in the sanctuary, rather than in a tomb. The Turkish flooring now covering the eastern area of the Byzantine sanctuary, however, conceals all archaeological evidence as to the exact place in the north part of the sanctuary where the casket might have been displayed⁶³ (text fig., 9).

THE SOUTH AISLE

From the literary accounts by the later Russian pilgrims we can rather accurately locate in the southeast exedra two relics which were very popular among foreign visitors. The table at which Abraham offered hospitality to three angels and the "iron bed" on which martyrs died are always mentioned in tandem by the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Russian travelers. Stephen of Novgorod saw these relics on his left as he walked toward the setting sun, near the "very beautiful columns of purple stone" brought from Rome—clearly the porphyry columns of the exedrae, often thought of as having come

⁵⁹ Russian Anonymus, 130. On St. Arsenius, patriarch of Constantinople, see L. Petit, "Arsène Autorianos et Arsénistes," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, I/2 (Paris, 1937), cols. 1992–94; I. Sykoutres, Περὶ τὸ σχίσμα τῶν Ἀρσενιατῶν, in Ἑλληνικά, 2 (1929), 267–332; Ševčenko, "Notes on Stephen," 174–75.

⁶⁰ Stephen, 51–52. The passageway in question is the so-called *diabatika* of St. Nicholas; see Antoniadēs, Ἐκφρασις, II, 163–69.

⁶¹ Ignatius, 7 = Khitrowo, 135. Less specific are Alexander, 357, and Zosima, 3 = Khitrowo, 161, 201. The deposition of the body of Patriarch Arsenius in 1284 was still remembered in a short Byzantine historical work dating from 1392, thus confirming the information of the foreign travelers. See *Byzantinische Analekten*, ed. J. Müller (Vienna, 1852), 56. On the political overtones of the cult of St. Arsenius, see Ševčenko, "Notes on Stephen," 174–75, and J. Engelhardt, "Die Arsenianer und Hesychasten," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie*, 8 (1938), 48–135.

⁶² Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, ed. F. Lopez-Estrada, Libros raros o curiosos, 1 (Madrid, 1943), 47 = *Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403–1406*, trans. G. Le Strange (London, 1928), 75–76.

⁶³ Cf. Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 11. The miraculous preservation of this body cited by Clavijo (and also mentioned in Russian Anonymus Dialogue, 14, which, however, identifies this relic as the body of the Patriarch of Constantinople John Chrysostom) might suggest an interpretation of Stephen of Novgorod's note that at St. Arsenius' body a monk anointed the visitor from Russia with the Saint's oil (Stephen, 52). Miraculously preserved bodies are often said to exude a fragrant oil, which is used to anoint the faithful at the saint's shrine, and often to heal the sick. It should be noted in this context that the Russian Anonymus comments that "healing comes from this relic" (p. 130).

from Rome.⁶⁴ Since Stephen has just reentered the church from the shrine of the Holy Well which adjoined St. Sophia at the southeast corner and gave access to it through the large east door in the south aisle, he is describing the southeast exedra.⁶⁵ Both Zosima and the Russian Anonymus, like Stephen, visited these relics as they left the Holy Well, the Russian Anonymus adding that the relics were to the right (i.e., south) of the sanctuary, or, more likely, to the right of the passage leading from it to the south aisle.⁶⁶ Ignatius of Smolensk saw these relics after viewing the tomb of Patriarch Arsenius in the sanctuary, but gives no real indication as to where they were located.⁶⁷ The table of Abraham's hospitality was made of stone, according to Stephen and the fifteenth-century French traveler Bertrandon de la Broquière, who adds that it was shaped like a tub.⁶⁸ The connection between the three angels who visited Abraham and the triune God is, of course, widely recognized in the East, and it is not surprising to note that the Russian Anonymus claims an icon of the Holy Trinity stood above this table.⁶⁹ Interestingly, in the year 1200 Anthony of Novgorod described "an icon with three angels depicted on it" in approximately the same place, that is, in the southeast exedra, but connected the image of the three angels with the apparition of St. Michael to the boy guarding the tools while the church was being built.⁷⁰ In Anthony's time, however, Abraham's table was located in a church at the Imperial Palace.⁷¹ Since none of the lists of relics which the Latin crusaders sent to the West seem to mention the table, this relic probably remained in Constantinople, and, when the Great Palace was for the most part abandoned under the Palaeologan emperors,⁷² it was no doubt brought to St. Sophia and placed before the appropriate icon.

⁶⁴ Stephen, 52–53 = Khitrowo, 117–18. The tradition of the Roman provenance of the porphyry exedra columns of St. Sophia is in the Διήγησις, 2, 9, ed. Preger, 76, 85.

⁶⁵ Between the door leading into the church from the Holy Well and the southeast exedra, Stephen mentions passing the sanctuary and the place where a lamp glass fell on the pavement from a great height but did not break (p. 52). On the shrine of the Holy Well, see R. Guiland, "Études sur Constantinople byzantine: le Puits-Sacré," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, 5 (1956), 35–40, and Mango, *The Brazen House*, 60–72. Since the Shrine of the Holy Well is not an integral part of St. Sophia, the testimony of the Russian travelers about it will not be analyzed here. The Russian material, moreover, has been carefully studied by Mango.

⁶⁶ Zosima, 3; Russian Anonymus, 129 = Khitrowo, 201, 226. Alexander, 357 = Khitrowo, 161, simply notes that these relics are at St. Sophia without suggesting exactly where.

⁶⁷ Ignatius, 7 = Khitrowo, 135–36.

⁶⁸ Stephen, 52 = Khitrowo, 117. Bertrandon de la Broquière, *Voyage d'outremer*, ed. Ch. Schefer (Paris, 1892), 154 = trans. P. Legrand, *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 4 (Glasgow, 1811), 519.

⁶⁹ Russian Anonymus, 129. The story of God's appearance to Abraham at the oak of Mambre in the guise of three angels (Gen. 18:1–22) was taken as a prefigurement of the Holy Trinity revealed only later. See M. Alpatov, "La 'Trinité' dans l'art byzantin et l'icone de Roublev," *Echos d'Orient*, 26 (1927), 150–86. How ingrained this traditional identification of three angels with the Holy Trinity had become is suggested by the fact that three of the five Russian descriptions speak of "the Trinity" visiting Abraham (Stephen, 52; Russian Anonymus, 129; Zosima, 3 = Khitrowo, 117, 226). Ignatius and Alexander even describe the event as Christ (*sic*) manifesting himself as the Trinity (Ignatius, 7; Alexander, 357 = Khitrowo, 135–36, 161).

⁷⁰ On the apparition of the Archangel Michael at St. Sophia, see *supra*, pp. 74–76.

⁷¹ Anthony, 19–20. On the churches of the Imperial Palace, see Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*², 361–64 and *passim*.

⁷² Cf. R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed., Archives de l'Orient Chrétien, 4A (Paris, 1964), 109.

Quite near the table of Abraham, according to all the later Russian travelers, stood an "iron bed" on which saints were martyred.⁷³ The "iron bed" would appear to be a gridiron similar to the one on which St. Lawrence was traditionally roasted.⁷⁴ The Russian Anonymus connects it with the martyrdom of George and Nicetas, neither of whom is recorded as having been roasted on a gridiron.⁷⁵ He further notes that this "iron bed" is to the right (south) of Abraham's table, which is itself to the right (south) of the entrance to the sanctuary; and that it is "farther into the corner."⁷⁶ Quite plainly, then, the Russian Anonymus would locate the "iron bed of the martyrs" close to the southeast corner of the southeast exedra, for he also notes that it is "leaning against the rear wall."⁷⁷ The text, however, goes on to say that at the end of the "bed" stands a column topped by a stone casket containing relics.⁷⁸ The southeastmost column of the church is, of course, structural, and can have nothing on top. But the floor of the southeast exedra bears the marks of a series of colonnettes which must have once supported a marble screen parallel to the south wall and about 3.6 meters from it.⁷⁹ Assuming, as seems reasonable, that the "column" which stood at the end of the "iron bed" is one of those colonnettes whose marks are still visible on the flooring, we can determine with some accuracy the placement of the relic of the "iron bed." The gridiron was to be found at the east wall of the south aisle, just north of the mark left by the most eastern of this line of colonnettes⁸⁰ (text fig., 11). Since the Russian Anonymus locates the "iron bed" of the martyrs south of the table of Abraham, and "farther into the corner," the latter relic would be north of the "iron bed" (text fig., 10). Further, Stephen of Nov-

⁷³ Stephen, 53; Ignatius, 7; Russian, 129–30; Alexander, 357; Zosima, 3 = Khitrowo, 118, 136, 226, 161, 201.

⁷⁴ Western visitors to St. Sophia, as a matter of fact, regularly identify this "iron bed" as the instrument of St. Lawrence's martyrdom (Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, 47 = *Embassy to Tamerlane*, 76; Tafur, *Andanças é viajes*, 172–73 = *Travels and Adventures*, 140), or a major part of it (de la Broquière, *Voyage d'outremer*, 154 = trans. Legrand, 519). On the hagiographic tradition of St. Lawrence roasted on a grid, see *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, VIII (Rome, 1967), cols. 108–29; the Byzantine tradition is indicated in *BHG*, II, 51–52.

⁷⁵ Russian Anonymus, 129–30. On the life and death of St. George "the Great Martyr," see H. Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris, 1909), 45–76, and *BHG*, I, 212–23; on St. Nicetas the Goth, see H. Delehaye, "Les saints de Thrace et de Mésie," *Analecta Bollandiana*, 31 (1912), 209–15, and *BHG*, II, 136.

⁷⁶ Russian Anonymus, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ See the plan of this part of the building in Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 11. This marble screen must have been in some way connected with the imperial *metatorion* (a kind of private box or oratory for the emperor's use) which was in the southeast exedra. The arrangement and the extent of the imperial *metatorion*, and just what this screen divided is very unclear. See Antoniadēs, "Ἐκφράσις," II, 214–24, but also Mango, *The Brazen House*, 72 and *passim*.

⁸⁰ One should accept the testimony of the Russian Anonymus that a column (more correctly, here, a colonnette) stood at the end of the "bed of the martyrs," because the physical evidence of a column standing in approximately that place is available. That a stone casket on top of this column contained relics of "the forty martyrs" and of "the eleven infants" (the latter being transformed into the "fourteen thousand murdered infants," i.e., the "Holy Innocents" slaughtered at Bethlehem at the order of King Herod, in the Dialogue version of this text [Russian Anonymus Dialogue, 13]) sounds highly suspicious in itself and is corroborated by no other source. Like so many other surprising details in the Russian anonymous text, this one too may be presumed to be an ingenuous pious addition. (Could an intricately carved basket capital on the colonnette be the origin of this idea?)

gorod seems to have it on his left as he returns to St. Sophia from the Holy Well; so it would also be south of the door to the Holy Well at the east end of the south aisle.

The material offered in the preceding pages suggests a few broad observations on the church of St. Sophia in late Byzantine times. The descriptions left by the Russian travelers serve to reinforce a concept of St. Sophia that is often ignored. By late Byzantine times the church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople had become one of the major depositories of relics in the Christian world. To its worldwide fame as a marvel of architecture and to its aura as the metropolitan cathedral of the Eastern Christian world was added the mystique of a building consecrated by the presence of marvelous relics. The pious belief that the "pillars of the church" were strengthened by the relics of the saints enshrined in them, a belief reflected in the *Διήγησις* and related documents,⁸¹ had developed into a tangible display of sacred relics. The *martyrion* dome on the basilical cathedral fulfilled its ritual function in Palaeologan times. St. Sophia had now become central to the Byzantine Christian faith in almost every conceivable way; the model of Byzantine architecture, worship, and church-state *symphonia* had become also the repository of many of the palladia of the Christian Empire.

The descriptions of the Russian travelers may also help us to understand somewhat better the relationship of the various parts of the Great Church. The architectural purpose of the narthex, the nave, and the sanctuary has always been clear; but what of the aisles, integral parts of the whole structure, yet marked off esthetically and physically from the great domed central nave by rows of columns, and, quite literally, often by draperies?⁸² From the accounts of the Russian pilgrims one begins to feel that St. Sophia functioned, ecclesiastically, on two levels. The central nave and the altar at its end were devoted to liturgical use, whereas the aisles with their vaulted chambers served as separate oratories, self-contained areas where the individual worshipper could make his private devotions before the holy relics and images. In late Byzantine times the aisles of St. Sophia must have housed a number of shrines, much as did contemporary cathedrals in the West.

Finally, the Russian sources should serve as a reminder that our conception of the interior decoration of the Great Church as composed largely of revetment, cornice, column, and capital probably conforms to the appearance of the building only in the times of Procopius and Paul the Silentiary, and, later, in the times of the sultans and the Turkish Republic. Indeed, judging from the Russian descriptions, figurative mosaics and hanging icons must have been used far more frequently than is usually supposed in the later years of the great Christian cathedral.

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⁸¹ *Διήγησις*, 22, ed. Preger, 99 and *passim*.

⁸² Cf. Lethaby and Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia*, 86-90.